1. (Amended) A chromatographic assay method, comprising the steps of:

a) providing a polymeric membrane type flow matrix attached to a liquid-impervious backing, which flow matrix permits a capillary force assisted lateral flow therethrough, and at least a part of which flow matrix contains ion-exchange function, wherein the flow matrix has a foam-like structure with pores in the range of 0.01-20μm;

b) treating the flow matrix to reduce or eliminate nonspecific adsorption properties of the flow matrix;

c) applying to the flow matrix a sample containing at least two components;

d) initiating a first lateral flow of aqueous fluid to transport the sample through the flow matrix and separate the components therein;

e) interrupting said lateral flow; [and either]

f1) detecting at least one of said separated components on the flow matrix in the position reached by the respective component when the flow was interrupted; [or] and

f2a) initiating a second flow of aqueous fluid to transport the components in a direction substantially transverse to the direction of the first lateral flow;

f2b) interrupting said second lateral flow; and

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f2c) detecting at least one of said separated components on the flow matrix in the position reached by the respective components when the second lateral flow was interrupted.

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7. (Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the polymeric membrane type flow matrix is first placed on a flat support surface with the backing contacting the surface.